

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 13088 of Gallaudet College, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 for a proposed modification and further processing of the Gallaudet Campus Plan to convert the Old Gymnasium into offices and to make additions to the Student Union Building and theater in an R-4 District at the premises 800 Florida Avenue, N.E., (Parcel 141/69, Square W-4050, Lot 1).

HEARING DATE: November 14, 1979

DECISION DATE: November 14, 1979 (Bench Decision)

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject property is located at 800 Florida Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. and is in an R-4 District.

2. The applicant, Gallaudet College, seeks the Board's permission to renovate the Old Gymnasium into offices and to make additions to the Student Union Building and Ely Hall and to construct an addition to the Theater.

3. Gallaudet College is a private educational institution chartered by the United States Congress and serving the needs of deaf people. It receives substantial federal support and is subject to the review of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Office of Management Budget, and the Congress in carrying out the mandates of the Congress.

4. The Campus Plan for Gallaudet College was first approved by the BZA in BZA Orders No. 11093, dated December 13, 1972, February 22, 1973 and April 5, 1973, and was approved with modifications in BZA Order No. 12068, dated June 17, 1976, and BZA Order No. 12757, dated November 6, 1978. The Campus Plan covers the proposed development from 1975 to 1985. The subject application is a request for further processing of the approved Campus Plan.

5. The BZA, in Order No. 12757, dated November 6, 1978, ordered Gallaudet College to submit a revised Master Campus Plan to the BZA for its review and approval within six months of November 6, 1978. The deadline for the submission of the revised Master Plan was extended by BZA to February 6, 1980.

6. The Master Plan approved by the BZA in 1976 provided for the demolition of the Old Gymnasium (facilities Master Plan P.32). Upon reconsideration, the College has decided that the historic value of the Old Gymnasium should be preserved. The College has thus decided to restore the building. The College was encouraged to preserve this landmark by the National Capital Planning Commission. The BZA has approved a restoration of the Old Gymnasium by BZA Order No. 12068, dated June 17, 1976. However, in that order the Board did not approve a specific use of the renovated building.

7. Originally built in 1881 the Old Gymnasium housed the second enclosed swimming pool in the United States, a bowling alley on its ground floor, and an all-sort-of-purpose room on a second floor. The space was used for exercises, wrestling, juggling, gymnastics and other vigorous Victorian calisthenics. With the advent of the twentieth century and the importance of team and competitive sports, this building was superseded by other structures and secondary uses were allowed to fill in. Gallaudet College intends to restore this building to be used as an Alumni Center. The ground floor will house offices of the Alumni Association with the required fire stairs, kitchen and lavatories. The second floor will be used as a lounge, dining room and seminar space for the alumni. Both levels of the interiors will be renovated in a purpose that evokes the spirit of the late 1880's.

8. The applicant testified that the new use of the Old Gymnasium as an Alumni Center will not affect the Campus traffic and parking plans and current staff requirements. Only one maintenance staff member and two food service employees will be added to the staff when the building is restored.

9. Consistent with the goals and purposes of the facilities Master Plan, approved by the BZA in 1976 (facilities Master Plan P. 39), the schematic design for the Theater Annex not only includes all functions outlined in the Master Plan, but also responds to the detailed program for the facility which was developed in late 1978 and 1979.

10. The Annex to the Gallaudet Theater is a single story structure of approximately 10,400 gross square feet of utility areas attached directly to the east side of the existing building. The Annex consists of a scenery construction area, a rehearsal room, a costume shop, a classroom, a small lounge and office areas. All of the facilities are presently housed in the Theater in cramped and substandard spaces.

11. The applicant testified that no change in existing use will result from the addition to the Theater. No increase in staff or student body is anticipated except for the addition of one additional maintenance staff person. No additional parking will be required and there will be no negative impact on Campus parking resulting from the Theater addition.

12. Consistent with the goals and purposes of the facilities Master Plan, approved by the BZA in 1976, (facilities Master Plan P.46 and 48) the schematic design for the Student Union-Ely Hall restoration not only includes all functions outlined in the Master Plan but also responds to the detailed programming for the facility which was developed in late 1978 and 1979.

13. The "major renovation to the Student Union Building and Ely Hall," listed in BZA Order No. 12757 of November 7, 1978 (P. 2, 10, LN. 11), recognizes this facility as "planned for construction in the very near future," but this facility does not require parking or involve other matters which the College intends to address in the revised Master Campus Plan due for submission in February 1980.

14. The detailed analysis of the existing structure of the Student Union Building-Ely Hall renovation and the response to the detailed program resulted in the maximum feasible use of all existing construction as well as new construction for connections of the buildings to make a small structure to serve the unified program for all student support and activities in a small auditorium and conference rooms which could not be accommodated within the existing structures. The additions and necessary alterations to the exterior of the structures are all within the original Master Plan site designation for the Student Union and define a central courtyard for activities related to the recreational part of the program and a smaller, quiet courtyard adjacent to office and counselling areas. The design seeks to unify the now incompatible structures and to present a new, more inviting facade to the major Campus mall.

15. The two existing buildings of the Student Union Building and Ely Hall have a gross square footage of 89,000 feet of floor space. The connecting link would have approximately 11,500 gross square feet. One additional maintenance staff member will be added.

16. The applicant testified that the plans for the three projects on the Gallaudet Campus will have no real impact on the Campus since the emphasis is basically to improve the quality of buildings for existing programs at Gallaudet. As a result of these three projects there will be no increase in student enrollments or faculty. There will be an increase of

approximately five additional persons needed for maintenance and food service.

17. All Gallaudet College faculty, staff, students, construction workers and visitors park on the Gallaudet Campus. There is no off-campus parking of vehicles associated with Gallaudet.

18. Gallaudet has taken and is taking certain actions to reduce the number of vehicles on the Campus. It recently initiated a shuttle bus service to Union Station and Eastern Market Metro stations to pick up and deliver its faculty, staff and students, thus encouraging the use of public transportation. It is expected that this service will be expanded. The College has been regularly encouraging more carpooling and this apparently has helped to reduce vehicles on the Campus. Furthermore, the College is investigating "van pooling" which would replace eight to ten vehicles with one van, another form of pooling.

19. Advisory Neighborhood Commission - 5B, by letter of November 6, 1979, recommended that the application be approved. It noted that ANC had received no notice of any opposition to the application.

20. The Mt. Olivet Heights Citizens Association, Inc., by letter of November 13, 1979, noted that it had no opposition to the application.

21. There was no opposition to the application at the public hearing of November 14m 1979, nor in the file.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant has substantially complied with the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations. The conversion of the Old Gymnasium into offices and the addition to the Student Union Building and Theater will require only a minimal increase in staff and no increase in the number of students. No additional parking spaces will be required. The traffic impact of the College will be unchanged by the proposals contained in this application. Landscaping will not be disturbed. The Board further concludes that the proposed modification and construction constitutes a further processing of the Campus Plan. The Board concludes that the special exception can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the Application is GRANTED.

VOTE: 5-0 (John G. Parsons, William F. McIntosh, Connie Fortune, Charles R. Norris and Leonard L. McCants to GRANT).

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:



STEVEN E. SHER
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER:

19 FEB 1980

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES, INVESTIGATIONS, AND INSPECTIONS.

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."